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The Critique of Multiculturalism in Britain: Integration, Separation and Shared Identification

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Multiculturalism as a political programme is under attack from politicians, journalists, and academics. The criticisms it faces are many and varied: that it presupposes an essentialist conception of culture that treats culture as something which is static, homogeneous, and bounded; that it gives unfair advantages to minority cultural and religious groups through special provisions such as exemptions from laws and policies; and that it encourages cultural communities to form separate parallel societies rather than integrate. It is the last of these criticisms that has been particularly prominent in Britain over the past fifteen years. But when it is said that multicultural policies in Britain have discouraged integration, we need to be clear about what is meant by both 'multiculturalism' and 'integration'. The latter is variously defined as a process of mutual adjustment, as sharing a national identity, and as participation on equal terms by members of different cultural groups in the major spheres of society. Once the necessary distinctions have been drawn, it is far from clear that multiculturalism discourages integration. But doubts can also be raised about whether integration is always desirable, or whether the more integrated a society becomes, the better. Although integration has been regarded as an important goal, for various reasons that I shall explore it needs to be treated with caution.

Keywords: integration, multiculturalism, national identity, shared identity, liberal democracy

Multiculturalism as a political programme has come under fire in Britain from politicians and journalists (Goodhart 2013, Cameron 2011, M. Phillips 2005, Steyn 2005, and West 2013), whilst at a more general level its theoretical underpinnings have been targeted by academics (Cantle 2012, and Barry 2001). The criticisms it faces are many and varied: that it presupposes an essentialist conception of culture that treats cultures as static, homogeneous, and bounded, with the result that multicultural policies tend to entrench traditional practices and promote the interests of established elites within cultural communities (Barry 2001, and Kukathas 2003);¹ that it gives unfair advantages to minority cultural and religious groups through additional funding and special provisions such as exemptions from laws and policies (Barry 2001);² that it is bad for women (Okin 1999); that it discourages cultural communities from integrating and encourages them to form separate parallel societies (Goodhart 2013, West 2013).

It is the last one of these criticisms that I propose to examine in this article because it has played a prominent role in the public debate over multiculturalism that has taken place in Britain during the past fifteen or so years. When it is said that multicultural policies have discouraged integration, we need to be clear about what is meant by both ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘integration’ since each of these terms means different things to different people. Once the necessary distinctions have been drawn, it is at the very least questionable whether these policies discourage integration. Even if they have fostered a degree of separation between cultural and religious groups in Britain, that might not be a bad thing since doubts can be raised about whether integration in its different senses is always desirable, and whether it is always the case that the more integrated a society becomes, the better. Furthermore, although integration in more than one of its senses has been regarded as an important goal by successive British governments, policies that aim to promote it need to be treated with caution, and there are moral limits to the means through which it can be legitimately pursued. In exploring these issues, I do not aim to provide a systematic defence of multicultural laws and policies, but rather to show that they need not come into conflict with policies that aim to facilitate integration in any of the common meanings given to the idea of integration. I shall also offer some grounds for thinking that multicultural laws and policies may play a role in promoting one of the conditions that helps to create or sustain a reasonably just society.

1. Multiculturalism and separation

In his Munich Security Conference speech delivered in February 2011, David Cameron distanced himself from what he called ‘state multiculturalism’, claiming that ‘[u]nder the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and apart from the mainstream. We’ve failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We’ve even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run completely counter to our values’ (Cameron 2011).

To some extent Cameron's speech marked a change in rhetoric towards multiculturalism, but it is not clear that it signalled a radical break in policy from that of the two previous Labour governments. Ever since the Cantle Report (2001) into the disturbances (as they were called) in various northern towns in the late spring and early summer of 2001, politicians from different parties have expressed concern at the perceived separation between different ethnic and religious groups in various towns and cities, with multiculturalism providing a convenient scapegoat. On closer inspection, however, it is unclear why anyone should think that multiculturalism, understood as a state-supported normative approach to cultural diversity, has the intention or the effect of encouraging different ethnic or religious groups to form 'parallel societies'.

The term 'multiculturalism' is used in very different ways, and it is implausible to suppose that there is one uniquely correct way of understanding it. Nevertheless it would be perverse in a British context to define it in a way that makes it fundamentally opposed to integration. In giving an adequate explanation of what 'multiculturalism' has meant in Britain, we would surely need to make reference to the way in which rules, laws and policies have been interpreted with some sensitivity to their effects on cultural and religious minorities, and indeed the way in which various exemptions from rules and laws have been provided when these rules and laws have been thought to place unreasonable burdens on members of these groups. So, for example, legislation governing cremation has come to be interpreted so that it permits open air funeral pyres; male Sikhs have been permitted to ride motorcycles without crash helmets provided that they wear turbans; school meal menus have been adapted in order to provide halal food choices; rules governing school uniform and company dress codes have been revised so that they are consistent with the requirements of different religions. One of the key motivations behind these accommodations has been to prevent minority groups from becoming marginalised, to ensure that they enjoy equality of

opportunity, and to prevent them from being torn between two different moral rules or codes of conduct as a result of their religious and cultural beliefs. In other words it would seem that one of the main impulses behind them has been to promote integration rather than encourage separation.

Multiculturalism, it seems to me, is best characterised as the public recognition or accommodation of minority cultures, or more specifically, as the recognition or accommodation of cultural minorities in the design of legislatures, in the formulation and interpretation of laws and policies, or in the choice of rules to govern public institutions. This is a very broad definition. It allows the possibility of different varieties of multiculturalism that are grounded in different normative principles and place different moral limits on the accommodation of cultural minorities. Understood in this way, multiculturalism is perfectly consistent with regarding some of the practices of a minority – or a minority within a minority – as intolerable. And multiculturalism is not inherently opposed to integration. It might be said, however, that when it is understood in these terms, multiculturalism doesn't have any inherent commitment to promoting integration either, and that over time it has developed in Britain in a way that neglects the importance of integration. Relevant here is a distinction that David Goodhart has drawn between liberal and separatist multiculturalism. Whilst liberal multiculturalism is prepared to extend special treatment to minorities 'when this helps to integrate them better as equal citizens into mainstream society', that is, 'within an already existing culture and political system', separatist multiculturalism 'privileges minority identities over common citizenship', 'wants to positively promote and fund ethnic difference', and 'regards a core national culture as either non-existent or illegitimate' (Goodhart 2013). Goodhart claims that in Britain during the late 1970s and early 1980s a policy of liberal multiculturalism morphed into one of separatist multiculturalism at the local level.

Whether a shift of this kind really happened in Britain is contestable.³ Many of the policies that Goodhart regards as indicative of a separatist multiculturalist approach could also be regarded as part of a liberal multiculturalist agenda. For example, the ‘single identity funding’ that he sees as central to separatist multiculturalism might be defended on the grounds that allocating funds to groups defined along ethnic or religious lines enables these groups to flourish and their members to develop a more confident sense of their identity, which it turn makes it easier for them to integrate (Goodhart 2013, pp. 190ff). Goodhart might reply that even if this were the rationale behind such funding, its effect has been to foster parallel societies or communities and to discourage integration. But even if it is true that multiculturalism in Britain has developed in such a way that it has had the effect of not encouraging integration or positively discouraging it, this would at best give grounds for reforming multiculturalism rather than abandoning it.

In any case, before we can even properly judge whether British multiculturalism has neglected the importance of integration and, if it has, whether this is a problem, we need to be clear about what *integration* itself means. My contention here is that ‘integration’ has been used to refer to very different phenomena in British policy documents and the speeches of politicians and public figures, in a way that is unhelpful. And when these different understandings are combined with the academic literature on the subject, the potential for confusion is even greater. What I propose to do, therefore, is to distinguish these different meanings of integration, relate them to both the academic literature and to public pronouncements on the issue, and then ask why it should be thought that integration, in the different senses distinguished, is valuable.⁴

2. The meanings of ‘integration’

In British public debate, there has been a tradition of distinguishing integration from assimilation that goes back at least as far as a speech made by Roy Jenkins in 1966 shortly

after he became Home Secretary (Jenkins 1967, p. 267). I'm not going to examine his attempt or indeed the history of attempts to distinguish these two ideas. Instead I am going to take as my starting point the way in which Tariq Modood draws the distinction between them in *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea* (2013). According to Modood, what distinguishes assimilation from integration is fundamentally that assimilation is a *one-way process* in which minority cultural groups change at least some of their customs, practices, and forms of behaviour in order to fit in with the dominant or majority group's way of doing things. In contrast, integration is a two way process which involves *mutual* adjustment and adaptation (Modood 2013, p. 44, and Kymlicka 1995, p. 96). We might call this the *process account* of integration. It is a perfectly coherent way of drawing the distinction between integration and assimilation. No doubt in practice the majority group always shifts its ground to some degree in response to immigration and the presence of minority groups, but there are nevertheless key differences between integrationism and assimilationism when they are understood as normative policy approaches: for example, the latter, unlike the former, may suppose that minorities are morally required to change their practices without any such changes being morally required of the majority group.

When the distinction is drawn in this way it is easy to see why someone might regard a policy of integration as preferable to one of assimilation on grounds of fairness – and indeed why it might be thought that if there is a duty to integrate, then it binds the majority group as well as minority groups. Those who regard integration as a two-way process, and think fairness requires that there should be mutual adaptation in the face of the problems of cohabitation that arise from cultural and religious diversity, need not mean that on each and every issue, each side should give a bit. There are some issues where minorities may be required to shift their ground, others where the majority may be required to do so. For example, it might plausibly be held that it is reasonable to require immigrants in Britain to

learn English, and to suppose that they have a duty to do so (though whether this duty should be enforced as a condition of granting citizenship is more controversial). And it might plausibly be held that it is reasonable to require the majority to accept the reform of laws when they come into conflict with the norms of a minority religion, at least when no injustice would be involved in doing so.

The idea that both immigrant groups and the indigenous majority should each adapt its practices when cultural or religious differences create problems is open to question, however. Goodhart, for one, is sceptical:

Citizens in modern democracies have ‘squatters’ rights’; beyond treating newcomers fairly there is no obligation on them to change. It is the immigrant who has freely chosen to join an already existing society and must carry the burden of any adaptation that is necessary for a fruitful life. (Goodhart 2013 p.70, see also p. 204)

Goodhart’s argument here for why the majority group is under no obligation to change or adapt is problematic. First, we cannot plausibly say that children and second generation members of immigrant groups freely chose to immigrate, yet they may be socialised into the ways of these groups and speak a different first language to the majority in the society they have joined, with the consequence that the ‘burdens of adaptation’ they face are high through no fault of their own. Secondly, there may be goods the production of which are required for the flourishing of all of those living in a country but which would be much easier to create if there is mutual adaptation. Under these circumstances, sharing fairly the costs of producing these goods may require both sides to change their behaviour. It may even be the case that these goods could not in practice be created without mutual adaptation and their importance for the development or maintenance of a reasonably just society might be sufficient to justify the claim that minority groups and the majority group are each under a duty to change their

ways. Suppose, for example, that certain kinds of bonds between the members of a state are required in order to provide the mutual trust that is necessary for a just society to be created and sustained, but these bonds are unlikely to be forged unless there is mutual adaptation (see Miller 1995, pp. 93-96).⁵ Would this not justify the claim that both minority groups and the majority group have a duty to change their behaviour?

This second point draws attention to the fact that a process account of integration considered on its own has no substantive content. Indeed if we adopt such an account it is not clear what a *policy* of integration would look like, or indeed what a duty to integrate would entail. According to the process account, integration occurs when different cultural groups, including the majority group, adjust their various practices, traditions and customs to fit in with each other. But this account does not specify in what ‘direction’ those practices, customs and traditions need to change for integration to occur, nor does it identify a goal at which integration should aim. When integration is understood solely in accordance with the process account, in order to promote it the state might put in place structures or procedures that facilitated engagement between minority groups and the majority group under conditions of equality, so that changes were freely negotiated rather than imposed, without any presumption that it is cultural minorities that always have to change their ways, but that is about as far as a policy of integration could go. A policy of integration of this kind would nevertheless be consistent with multiculturalism and indeed could be multicultural in character in so far as the structures created for facilitating dialogue provided cultural minorities with public recognition of some kind (see Parekh, 2000, pp. 219-224, 268-273, and 306-307).

The notion of integration that has informed British policy discussions has been rather different from this process account, however, because it does specify a goal at which policies should aim. In fact it seems to me that there are really two goals that lie behind the rhetoric of

integration in Britain, signifying two further concepts of integration that need to be distinguished from one another. I shall refer to them as *teleological accounts*. According to the first, a society is integrated to the extent that its members share a national identity; according to the second account, a society is integrated to the extent that members of socially significant groups participate together on equal terms in the major spheres or domains of society, such as work, education, politics, and civil society. Let me refer to the first of these accounts as the *national identity* account and to the second as the *interaction* account.

We can see Cameron sliding between the interaction account and the national identity account in comments that he makes in his Munich Security Conference speech (2011). He says that: ‘Instead of encouraging people to live apart, we need a clear sense of shared national identity that is open to everyone’. Here he moves seamlessly from a claim about lack of integration in something like the second sense – that is, groups living apart in a way that means they do not participate together in different spheres – to a claim about the importance of integration in the first sense – that is, of sharing a national identity. But there is no necessary connection between these two different senses. The members of a society could live together, in the sense of participating together as equals in the major spheres of society, without sharing a national identity, and they could share a national identity whilst leading separate lives. In reply it might be said that even though this is true conceptually, it is false empirically: although there is no logically necessary connection between integration in the interaction sense and integration in the national identity sense, in practice they go hand in hand. But that too is questionable: it is far from obvious that interacting together on equal terms in different spheres of society will lead to the sharing of a national identity, and it seems possible for people to come to share a national identity as a result of having it inculcated in them at school even if they are educated, live and work in separate self-contained cultural communities.

Note that a commitment to integration as a policy in either of these teleological senses might be combined with a commitment to integration in the process sense. It might be thought that a society in which members of different groups participate together on equal terms in its major spheres should be achieved in part through a process of mutual adjustment, with both the majority group and minority groups changing their practices and patterns of behaviour in order to do so. And it might be thought that a shared national identity should be negotiated between the majority group and minority groups in a way that involves adaptation on each side, with that process of negotiation and mutual adaptation perhaps continuing indefinitely in the light of changes in social and political circumstances.

I don't think it is profitable to ask which of these different accounts of integration is the correct or best one. Although the interaction account seems to me to come closest to capturing the ordinary meaning of the term, there are a range of different possible meanings that can reasonably be assigned to it and, within this range, it is open to academics and indeed politicians to define the term in the way that suits them, though nothing is gained in terms of intellectual illumination if they simply slide between different senses. So in the remaining two sections of the article I shall explore the question of whether integration in either or both of these teleological senses is valuable, whether it should be pursued as a policy goal, and if so, whether it can be combined with a commitment to multiculturalism, that is, with a commitment to the recognition or accommodation of cultural minorities in the formulation and interpretation of laws and policies, and in the design of rules for public institutions.

3. Integration as interaction

Elizabeth Anderson offers an interaction account of integration. According to her, integration 'consists in the full participation on terms of equality of socially significant groups in all domains of society' (Anderson 2010, p.113). She argues that integration is valuable and indeed an *imperative* for creating a just society. She provides two main arguments for that

conclusion, backed by a wealth of empirical evidence, largely from the United States. First, she argues that when minority groups lead separate lives they are generally deprived of access to opportunities, resources, and social capital that are available to the majority or dominant group.⁶ Second, she argues that when groups lead separate lives, this can reinforce stigmatizing stereotypes, lead to the growth of prejudice and mistrust and to a lack of respect, and thereby fuel discrimination. Integration, in contrast, promotes the trust and respect that is either required for a just society to be created and sustained, or that facilitates the creation and maintenance of such a society.⁷

The second of these arguments builds on Gordon Allport's contact hypothesis in social psychology (Allport 1954, and Anderson (2010), pp. 123-27). According to that hypothesis, contact between members of different groups tends to reduce prejudice when various conditions are met, in particular, when the contact concerned is frequent enough to lead to personal acquaintance, involves cooperation in pursuit of shared goals, is supported by institutional authorities, and takes place amongst participants that are accorded equal status. For convenience, let me call contact that meets the first two of these conditions 'meaningful interaction' and contact that meets all four of them 'ideal interaction'. Although the contact hypothesis is still controversial, there is a body of evidence that supports it, and it is no exaggeration to say that it is well-confirmed (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). Anderson argues that not only is ideal interaction likely to reduce prejudice and promote respect, it is also likely to reduce the feelings of anxiety and discomfort that otherwise occur when members of different groups come into contact with each other, and to reduce stigmatisation.

Anderson's argument for the importance of integration is powerful. But it leaves open the issue of whether segregation is a problem in Britain. Consider the question of whether British towns and cities exhibit a high degree of *residential* segregation. This is a controversial issue amongst those who have researched it. The conclusion one reaches seems

to depend in part on how one measures residential segregation. By using what is called ‘the index of dissimilarity’, which measures how evenly groups are spread out across an area, Ludi Simpson argues that residential segregation in Britain is largely a myth (Simpson 2004, Finney and Simpson 2009, Ch. 6). But this conclusion is contested by others. Ron Johnston, James Forrest and Mike Poulsen claim that the index used by Simpson can hide concentrations of minority groups, and they use a rather different measure – one that draws upon the definition of segregation employed in another index, ‘the index of isolation’ – to argue for a different conclusion, namely, that although ‘concentration into areas to the relative exclusion of all others is rare in English cities’, there are extensive concentrations of minorities of ‘ghetto-like proportions’ in some places, ‘of Indians in Leicester and, to a lesser extent, Bradford and Kirklees; of Pakistanis in Bradford, Oldham and Leicester; and of Bangladeshis in Oldham and, to a lesser extent again, Bradford and Sandwell’ (Johnston *et al* 2002, p.608).

The index of dissimilarity and the index of isolation provide contrasting perspectives. Johnston and his co-authors argue that ‘[n]either index is right and neither is wrong: it depends on what you want to measure’ (Johnston *et al* 2005, p. 1223). From the point of view of Allport’s contact hypothesis, it would seem that both indexes could have some relevance, for they both have a bearing on the extent to which individuals from different ethnic and religious groups are likely to have opportunities for meaningful interaction. In this respect, however, residential patterns are unlikely to be decisive, whatever the truth is about them in Britain. There is no guarantee even in neighbourhoods in which members of different ethnic groups live side by side that they will interact meaningfully (Uslaner, 2012, p. 42). Furthermore, even though shared neighbourhoods provide opportunities for interaction to take place, other potential sites may be as important, or more important, for facilitating it, such as workplaces and schools, not least because in these it may be harder for members of

different groups to avoid meaningful interaction. It could be that provided members of each group interact meaningfully with members of others groups in at least one important sphere, this is enough in the presence of the other supporting conditions to reduce levels of prejudice and help to achieve the level of mutual trust that is necessary for creating and sustaining a reasonably just society (Uslaner 2012, p. 43).⁸ Integration in the interaction sense can be a matter of degree and it may be that we don't need a particularly high degree of it to be in a position to foster that level of trust; other factors, such as the design of trustworthy public institutions, may then be more important.

If we take seriously the idea that integration is valuable in the interaction sense because it reduces prejudice, fosters mutual trust and mutual respect, and promotes equality of opportunity, and that a particular degree of it in one or more spheres or domains is therefore necessary to create the conditions for a just society, then there are a number of ways in which this could be sought as a policy goal. School catchment areas might be drawn up so that they extend across diverse neighbourhoods, with the result that schools themselves are likely to become more diverse. We might be less willing to support the establishment of new publically-funded faith schools because of the way in which they may contribute to the separation of religious communities, and we might subject existing schools of this kind to greater regulation, for example, it might be insisted they should admit a certain percentage of pupils from outside the religion to which they adhere if they are to receive public funding.⁹ Public housing might be distributed in a way that tries to ensure the presence of different cultural and religious groups in a neighbourhood. Public spaces, including parks, libraries, museums and art galleries, could be made more welcoming and of more interest to diverse ethnic and religious groups, with a greater presence of community police officers to ensure that harassment or intimidation of minorities is minimised. Civil associations, designed to promote dialogue between different groups, might be given public funding. Cameron himself

argues for the need ‘to encourage meaningful and active participation in society’, in part to establish common purposes ‘as people come together and work together in their neighbourhoods’. The importance of integration in the interaction sense may also provide an additional argument for a voluntary National Citizen Service: in the same speech, Cameron gestured towards a two-month programme of this kind ‘for sixteen-year-olds from different backgrounds to live and work together’ (see also Goodhart 2013, pp. 315-316).

All these policies are perfectly compatible with a commitment to multiculturalism in the broad sense I distinguished earlier. They do not stand in the way of providing public recognition to cultural and religious minorities and indeed some of the measures described may involve giving that recognition, for example, making the contents of libraries, museums and art galleries of more interest to those from minorities by including books and artefacts that are more relevant to their lives and their histories. But there are other policy measures to which the value of integration in the interaction sense might seem to lend some support that are in tension with a multiculturalist approach. For example, the value of integration in this sense might be thought to support laws or rules prohibiting the wearing of full-face veils in public, or in certain types of public interaction or public roles. Sometimes the argument for insisting that women’s faces should be uncovered rests on a view of what is needed to perform particular roles effectively – for example, it has been argued that school teachers are unable to communicate as effectively with a full-face veil (BBC 2006a),¹⁰ or that a jury should be able to see the faces of witnesses or defendants when they giving evidence in court in order to be able to make up their mind about what weight to give to it (BBC 2013)¹¹ – but often the argument is simply that a full-face veil puts up a barrier of a kind that discourages meaningful interaction (BBC 2006b).¹² A multicultural approach can without any inconsistency regard some minority practices as intolerable, but its claim to accommodate or give public recognition to cultural minorities would be cast into doubt if it were to sanction

coercive restrictions on minority practices when these practices do not involve the violation of individual rights.

It would be a mistake, however, to think that this argument shows that valuing integration in the interaction sense is incompatible with multiculturalism or that its value gives grounds for rejecting multiculturalism. Rather, it shows that a single-minded focus on the value of integration in the interaction sense can itself threaten individual rights, and that there are limits to the means that can be legitimately pursued in order to promote integration in this sense. Laws against the wearing of a niqab or burqa in public places seem to be an unjust encroachment on individual liberty even if we put aside the issue of whether they restrict the legitimate freedom to practice one's religion. Even if it were true that those who wear the niqab or burqa intend to put up barriers to meaningful interaction, it is not clear that the state could legitimately prevent them from doing so. No doubt punks who dye their hair orange, and wear safety-pins in their jackets, intend to put up barriers between them and others, but surely any society that prizes individual liberty has to permit (within wide parameters) people to wear what they choose, and style their hair in the way they want, even if this has some adverse effects on social cohesion. Some trade-offs may be possible here: for example, it may be permissible in some circumstances to enact unjust policies in order to promote the conditions for a just society. Elsewhere I have argued that citizenship tests deny the automatic moral entitlement of long term residents to citizenship but may nevertheless be justified all things considered if we have good reason to think that these tests facilitate integration in the interaction sense and in doing so foster the conditions for establishing or sustaining a just society (see Mason 2014, pp. 145-148). But there are dangers in travelling along this path. For often we are balancing the certainty of an injustice that would be caused by a particular measure against the possibility, or mere probability, that this measure may promote those conditions.

There is also a further set of questions about the weight and significance that should be accorded to the contact hypothesis in the unjust or “non-ideal” conditions that characterise British society, and whether integration is always beneficial under these conditions. Michael Merry argues that under non-ideal circumstances in which minority groups are stigmatised, integration in the interaction sense might not be the best way of enhancing equality or cultivating the capacities required for good citizenship, and that there may in consequence be good reasons for stigmatised groups to favour ‘voluntary separation’ (Merry 2013, Ch. 2).¹³ First, these groups may not benefit to any great extent from integrating in this sense. They may still be prevented from gaining access to opportunities and networks that the dominant group enjoy. There is no guarantee that members of the dominant group will make these opportunities available to minority groups; indeed they may be skilled at keeping these opportunities for members of their own group (Merry 2013, pp.42-45). Second, contact between groups may not be of the kind that is likely to lead to the cultivation of mutual respect or the erosion of stereotypes. The conditions under which Allport’s hypothesis specifies that contact will reduce prejudice, such as the support of institutional authorities, or its occurring between those of equal status, may not be met, and indeed prejudice may grow (Merry 2013, pp.32-33). Employing the terminology introduced earlier, the interactions involved might not be meaningful, and even if they are meaningful they might not meet the other conditions required for them to be ideal. Third, voluntary separation may give minorities a more confident sense of their own identity, and provide the conditions for them to acquire self-respect, free from forms of bullying and stereotyping to which members of stigmatised minorities are often subjected (Merry 2013, pp.32, 43, 69-72). This is especially the case in schools where pupils from minority faith families might be educated together and in the process acquire a better understanding of their own faith traditions. So, in summary, under some non-ideal circumstances, integration may not carry with it the same benefits, and

stigmatised minority groups may benefit to a greater extent from choosing to separate in one or more spheres of activity, particularly education.

In the light of the concerns about policies of integration in the interaction sense, they should be treated with caution. A fully integrated society in which groups, though they retain their particular identities, participate as equals and interact meaningfully in all the major spheres of society, may not be required in order to create the conditions for a just society. Degrees and kinds of integration that fall short of this standard may be sufficient when other conditions are favourable, whilst under non-ideal circumstances, we shouldn't simply suppose that integration will yield the same benefits that it would under more favourable conditions. And we have to recognise that even when integration in the interaction sense has value, its value needs to be weighed against any potential reduction in freedom that policies that seek to promote it would involve; as I have already noted, in some cases (for example, the adoption of laws that forbid the wearing of full-face veils in public) these policies may even threaten individual rights.

4. Integration as sharing a national identity

In the UK, the most common version of the national identity account maintains that Britain is integrated to the extent that its citizens share a national identity based on "British" values. Understood in these terms, a policy of integration that aims to promote a shared national identity seems consistent with a commitment to multiculturalism characterised in the broad way that I have done, at least provided that the values selected as the basis for the national identity are relatively thin and acceptable to those from diverse religious and cultural groups. But why should we think that it is valuable for Britain, or indeed any society, to be integrated in this sense?

For Cameron, the importance of sharing a national identity forged around British values seems to lie, at least in part, in avoiding the alienation that he thinks can play a role in

fuelling terrorism. In relation to young Muslims in Britain who are attracted to extremism, he believes that ‘we’ve failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong’ (Cameron 2011, see also Home Office 2011, p.44). In effect Cameron attaches importance to a shared national identity because he thinks it is crucial that those living in Britain should come to *identify* with their society in order to counter the threat that extremism and “radicalisation” pose to security and individual rights. Even if the role of alienation in bolstering that threat is being exaggerated, there is reason to think that alienation is a bad thing and that the creation and smooth functioning of reasonably just institutions will be facilitated by its reduction.

It is ultimately an empirical issue what enables citizens to identify with the institutions under which they live. But the endorsement of liberal-democratic values seems insufficient to provide the basis for a strong identification with institutions that realise these values, however much we might wish that it did. Indeed, allegiance to liberal-democratic values seems to provide no more reason to identify with British institutions than it does to identify with any other country’s institutions that realise those values to a significant degree, and the fact that they are embodied to some degree in the institutions that govern the lives of those who reside in Britain doesn’t seem to provide the kind of link to those institutions that would facilitate a strong identification with them. It is presumably for this reason that Cameron thinks it is important for people living in Britain to share *British* values and to see those values reflected in *British* institutions. But one of the challenges Cameron faces in providing what he sees as the solution to the problem of alienation is to present a vision of a shared national identity that is based on distinctively British values but is nevertheless inclusive, that is, can be endorsed by those who belong to a wide variety of religious and cultural groups, and by those within the same cultures and religions who have divergent conceptions of how to live. He highlights freedom of speech, freedom of worship,

democracy, the rule of law, equal rights regardless of race, sex or sexuality as key liberal values that define national identity: ‘a genuinely liberal country believes in certain values and actively promotes them.... It says to its citizens, this is what defines us as a society: to belong here is to believe in these things’ (Cameron 2011).¹⁴ The trouble is that these widely shared liberal-democratic values are not distinctively British.

Cameron’s failure in this respect puts him in the company of former Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown. Blair listed Britain’s essential values as ‘belief in democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, equal treatment for all, respect for this country and its shared heritage’ (Blair 2006). Brown argued that a ‘distinctive set of values’ has emerged from ‘the long tidal flows of British history’, but his list of liberty, civic responsibility, fairness and tolerance does not bear out that claim (Brown 2007).¹⁵ The *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* strategy document launched in 2005 singled out ‘respect for others and the rule of law, including tolerance and mutual obligations between citizens’ as ‘essential elements of Britishness’ (see Home Office 2005, CmCh.4, section 4). When we look at the pronouncements of other public figures who think it important for British citizens to share a national identity, the values that they mention are equally unexceptional. For example, Trevor Phillips, when chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, highlighted values such as ‘an attachment to democracy, freedom of speech, and equality’, and traditions such as ‘a common language, good manners and our care for children’ (Phillips, T. 2005).

There are potential responses to the challenge I have posed to the attempt to define British national identity in terms of liberal-democratic values, one of which Cameron himself offered in a newspaper article:

Of course, people will say that these values are vital to other people in other countries. And, of course, they’re right. But what sets Britain apart are the traditions and history that anchors them and allows them to continue to flourish

and develop. Our freedom doesn't come from thin air. It is rooted in our parliamentary democracy and free press. Our sense of responsibility and the rule of law is attached to our courts and independent judiciary. Our belief in tolerance was won through struggle and is linked to the various churches and faith groups that have come to call Britain home. These are the institutions that help to enforce our values, keep them in check and make sure they apply to everyone equally. And taken together, I believe this combination – our values and our respect for the history that helped deliver them and the institutions that uphold them – forms the bedrock of Britishness (Cameron, 2014).

Here I take Cameron to be suggesting that British national identity consists not merely in allegiance to a set of liberal-democratic values, but also in a commitment to the institutions in Britain that embody and promote these values, and respect for the traditions, movements and historical events that have created, sustained and reformed these institutions.

The thought here seems to be that what is distinctively British is the particular *form* liberal-democratic values have taken in Britain, namely, the particular institutions that embody these values, and the traditions of thought and historical movements through which these institutions have evolved and been nurtured. In order to clarify this possibility, we can distinguish two different conceptions of the basis for the shared identification that would overcome the alienation from society that some experience:

- (i) Citizens identify with their society because they believe that its institutions embody various liberal-democratic values to which they adhere.
- (ii) Citizens identify with their society because they adhere to liberal-democratic values, they endorse the particular forms that they believe these values have taken in their institutions, and they respect the historical

movements and traditions of thought that have played a key role in the development of these institutions.

(ii) seems superior to (i) as a solution to a problem of alienation because it describes a more psychologically plausible way for citizens to identify strongly with the society to which they belong, focusing as it does on the particular form that liberal democratic values take in it and on the history of its institutions. (ii) faces a different problem, however. Democracy and liberty take a particular form in institutions partly because these institutions give these values a particular interpretation – as do the historical movements and traditions of thought that were involved in the development of the institutions.¹⁶ But particular interpretations of liberal-democratic values are bound to be contentious – as indeed is the issue of which historical movements and events should be regarded as worthy of admiration and respect – and it is hard to believe that there are distinctively British interpretations of liberal-democratic values that are widely shared. For example, one thing that the furore created by the publication of Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* made evident is that British citizens interpret freedom of expression and its limits in different ways, and these different interpretations cut across ethnic and religious groups: there are those who insist that acts of expression should be restricted when they are blasphemous or disrespectful to God or Allah, whilst there are others who believe that allowing such acts is part of the very essence of freedom of expression.¹⁷ Even if there were an interpretation of values such as freedom of expression that was relatively widely shared, to insist on its acceptance as a condition of belonging ('to belong here is to believe in these things') would be to define what it is to be British in a way that is bound to fail to be adequately inclusive because that definition would exclude some citizens who, quite reasonably, interpreted those values differently.

In response it might be said that even if citizens do not at the moment converge on a particular interpretation of liberal values, there is no reason to think that convergence could

not happen over time. Indeed we might think that this is why it is important for citizens to be involved in a collective re-negotiation of national identity through public dialogue, for such a process holds out the promise of uncoerced convergence on the proper interpretation of these values. This offers one way in which a process account of integration, understood as mutual adjustment, might be combined with a teleological account of integration, understood as citizens sharing a particular national identity. And it provides us with a third possible way of understanding how shared identification might arise from allegiance to a national identity based on common values:

(iii) Citizens identify with their society because they believe that its institutions and practices embody the particular interpretation of liberal-democratic values that they have each come to endorse as a result of an on-going public dialogue in which they have had the opportunity to participate.

But even (iii) seems to me to be unrealistic in Britain. There is no reason to think that in the near future, or even over the medium term, British citizens will come to converge on particular interpretations of these values through any political process or form of open public dialogue, especially since even within the same culture and religion there is a diversity of reasonable conceptions of how to live and a diversity of reasonable conceptions of justice.

The difficulties involved in achieving uncoerced convergence on a particular interpretation of liberal-democratic values might motivate us to explore yet another possible basis for shared identification:

(iv) Citizens identify with their society because they endorse liberal-democratic values, and they believe that its institutions and practices embody an interpretation of those values that has emerged with a high degree of support from an on-going public dialogue in which they have had the

opportunity to participate, even though they may continue to disagree with that interpretation.

According to this conception, shared identification doesn't seem to provide the basis for a shared national identity, at least if we make the plausible assumption that a shared national identity, properly so called, requires co-nationals to possess *a sense of belonging together*, that is, to believe that there is some deep reason why they should be fellow citizens, of the sort that might be provided by sharing a set of distinctive values or a distinctive interpretation of a set of values. In order for the collective identification described in (iv) to be achieved, citizens do not need to share anything other than a general commitment to liberal-democratic values, together with the belief that their institutions embody an interpretation of these values that is a product of a public dialogue in which they have had the opportunity to participate. But once we have moved in this direction, away from the idea of a shared national identity based on a distinctive set of common values or a shared interpretation of common values, we might think that there is a better ideal of shared identification available for us – better because it is more inclusive under the circumstances of diversity in which we live. I have described this ideal elsewhere (2000, pp. 127-132, 2010 pp.870-871, and 2012, pp. 181-183) as *a sense of belonging to the polity*:

(v) Citizens identify with their society because (a) they feel 'at home' in a reasonably wide range of its institutions and practices, whether political or non-political, that is, they know their way around these institutions and practices and feel at ease in them; and (b) they have their own – perhaps distinctive – reasons for valuing these institutions and practices.

(v) is more inclusive than (iv) because it allows the possibility that citizens may come to identify with their society through valuing different institutions or practices in it, or through identifying with the same institutions and practices for different reasons – and in a way that

does not require them to share the same principles of justice. So, for example, different citizens may value the institutions of parliamentary democracy or the National Health Service for different reasons. Some may value these institutions partly because of their history, whereas others may value them solely for the role they currently play in their society. Some may value them because they think that these institutions and the goods they distribute compare favourably with those in the countries from which they have emigrated. Some may value these institutions on grounds of justice; others may value them because they or their family members have benefited from them. Some may find reasons for valuing these institutions from within their own particular moral visions or conceptions of how to live, whether religious or secular.¹⁸ A shared identification of this kind might even include citizens who reject at least some liberal values, for example, who think that adultery or homosexuality should not be tolerated – though admittedly it would be hard for a citizen to be part of it if she rejected all of those values.

The shared identification described in (i) is more desirable than that described in (v) because it would be better if citizens endorsed liberal-democratic values and identified with their institutions at least in part because these values were embodied in them. Even if I am correct in thinking that this kind of shared identification is unrealisable in the foreseeable future, and is in any case unlikely to be sufficient to solve a problem of alienation, there is good reason for educational policy to aim at it. The more people that acquire these values, the better, so children should receive a civic education in schools that aspires to inculcate them (even though it would be misleading to describe them as fundamental *British* values since they are not distinctively British.) But given that some people reject at least some of these values, and those who accept them disagree about how best to interpret them, (v) provides a more realistic goal to guide public policy beyond civic education, and describes a more psychologically plausible way in which people can come to identify strongly with their

society. What laws and policies are likely to promote shared identification of the kind described in (v) is a complex matter that I do not have the space in this article to explore in depth. Members of minority groups will find it harder to develop a sense of belonging to their polity if they experience widespread discrimination or hostility from the wider society on the basis of their race, ethnicity, or religion, so robust anti-discrimination policies and laws against harassment and insulting behaviour in public spaces have an important role to play. Multicultural accommodations to prevent members of minority groups from feeling torn between two different sets of moral rules or codes of conduct are surely also important in order to enable them to feel at home in institutions and practices. Unfortunately these accommodations can sometimes adversely affect the cultivation of a widespread sense of belonging to the polity. A particular policy – for example, providing an exemption from a requirement that animals be stunned before they are killed for the ritual slaughter of animals – may facilitate the identification of members of a minority group with the institutions and practices of the society to which they belong but alienate members of the majority group who regard it as permitting unnecessary cruelty to animals. Even when the benefits in terms of promoting identification for some outweigh the costs in terms of undermining that identification for others, there is the further issue of whether the measure is consistent with justice, and where the limits of multicultural accommodation should be drawn.¹⁹ Here again there is the potential for conflict between the just treatment of individuals or groups and promoting the conditions that are required for, or facilitate, the creation or maintenance of a reasonably just society, at least if we assume that shared identification of the kind described in (v) is one such condition. And once again we should be wary of treating individuals or groups unjustly, or allowing them to be treated unjustly, when the gains in terms of promoting one of the conditions of a just society are relatively small or uncertain.

5. Conclusion

Multiculturalism has been criticised for discouraging integration. What I have tried to do in this paper is to show, firstly, that ‘integration’ is multiply ambiguous and that the term is often given different meanings, sometimes in the same documents and speeches, without any acknowledgement; second, that multiculturalism, understood as a state-supported normative approach that gives public recognition to minority cultures or seeks to accommodate them, need not be hostile to policies aimed at facilitating integration in any of the main senses of ‘integration’; third, that when the different meanings of integration are properly distinguished, some difficult questions arise about its value and practicality.

Rather than seeking to promote integration in the sense of sharing a national identity, a culturally diverse society, such as Britain, might be better advised to foster a form of shared identification that does not rely upon such an identity. Different religious or cultural communities might be encouraged to attend to the reasons for valuing British institutions and practices that are available within their own particular moral outlooks, rather than being directed towards “British values” or told that they do not belong unless they endorse these values. A form of shared identification of this kind may be more realistically achievable, and some of the benefits that are alleged to flow from a shared national identity, such as a reduction in alienation, may also flow from it, thereby facilitating the creation and maintenance of a reasonably just society.

The vision of an integrated society in which members of different cultural and religious groups participate together on equal terms in its major spheres is an attractive one but a just society might be achievable even if meaningful interaction between members of minority groups and the majority group occurs only in a limited number of spheres; and under some non-ideal circumstances, institutions and practices that allow cultural minorities to separate to some degree if they so choose may have positive benefits in enabling their

members to acquire a more confident sense of their own identity, and to sustain some of the social bases of their self-respect.

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Disclosure Statement

Notes

¹ For a qualified defence of multiculturalism that consciously seeks to avoid essentialism, see Phillips A. (2007). I discuss the charge that multiculturalism is wedded to an essentialist view of culture in Mason (2007), pp. 221-243.

² For responses see Waldron (2002) and Quong (2006), 53-71.

³ Tariq Modood and Varun Uberoi regard the fostering of an inclusive national identity as a multiculturalist goal and see such a project as an integral part of multiculturalism in Britain: see Uberoi and Modood (2013 pp. 24-25). Goodhart's view is that this is merely one strand of multiculturalism. It does not seem to me that multiculturalism, as part of its nature, involves a commitment to promoting an inclusive national identity, but Uberoi and Modood may nevertheless be correct that this is the characteristic form it has taken in Britain.

⁴ In doing so, I am building on my earlier work on these issues: see Mason (2010).

⁵ For example, perhaps David Miller is correct that a shared national identity is required to sustain schemes of social justice that involve redistribution to those not able to provide for their own needs, but that such an identity could be achieved only through a process of mutual adaptation.

⁶ One of the challenges for empirical work in this area is to determine whether segregation causes inequality or inequality causes segregation. See Finney and Simpson (2009, p. 135), and Uslaner (2012, p. 41).

⁷ These are not Anderson's only reasons for thinking that integration is vital for a society. She also argues that segregation undermines democracy by impeding the formation of intergroup political coalitions, promoting a factionalised politics, and blocking the mechanisms needed to make officeholders accountable to everyone regardless of ethnicity; see Anderson (2010), Ch. 5. And she argues that segregation fosters elites who lack the motivation or understanding to attend to the interests of the excluded; see Anderson (2007, pp. 602-603).

⁸ Uslaner argues that the development of friendships across groups is also important: 'Living in a diverse and integrated neighbourhood with close friends of different backgrounds leads

to a greater likelihood of trust. Living in a segregated and less diverse neighbourhood without friends of different backgrounds makes someone less trusting' (Uslander 2012, p. 43).

⁹ The Cante Report (Cante, T. 2012), whilst not arguing against the public funding of faith schools, saw them as a potential barrier to community cohesion. In order to overcome this barrier, it argued that all schools should offer at least 25% of places to reflect other cultures or ethnicities in the local area (*ibid.*, p. 33), that faith schools in particular should offer 25% of their places to other faiths or denominations (*ibid.*, p. 37), and that education should in general be multicultural, and should be designed to promote understanding of, and respect for, the cultures in the school and the surrounding area (*ibid.*, pp. 35, 49). Harry Brighouse also argues that 70% of places at a faith school should be allocated by a lottery that gives no preference to those who come from families that share the faith of the school; see Brighouse (2009, pp. 89-90). Others have argued that there needs to be greater support for faith-based and non-faith based school initiatives designed to promote meaningful engagement between different communities; see Parker-Jenkins and Glenn (2011, 1-20).

¹⁰ In October 2006 a Muslim teaching assistant was suspended in a West Yorkshire school for insisting on wearing a veil in lessons.

¹¹ In September 2013, Judge Peter Murphy ruled that a Muslim woman could stand trial wearing a full face veil but had to remove it when giving evidence, on the grounds that 'the ability of the jury to see the defendant for the purposes of evaluating her evidence is crucial.'

¹² In October 2006, Jack Straw (then Leader of the House of Commons) described the veil as 'a visible statement of separation and difference', and whilst defending the right of Muslim

women to wear it, urged them to reflect upon the implications of doing so for communication between members of different cultural and religious groups, and indeed community relations in general.

¹³ In fairness to Anderson, it should be noted that she does not deny the value of some degree (and forms) of self-segregation: see Anderson (2010), pp. 183-185.

¹⁴ In the *Prevent* strategy document published after Cameron's speech, democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, were identified as core British values (see Home Office 2011, p. 44). In June 2014, in the wake of the so-called 'Trojan Horse' row, Cameron said: 'I would say freedom, tolerance, respect for the rule of law, belief in personal and social responsibility and respect for British institutions – those are the sorts of things that I would hope would be inculcated into the curriculum in any school in Britain whether it was a private school, state school, faith-based school, free school, academy or anything else'; see (BBC 2014a). In a similar vein, the Department of Education's guidance on promoting British values in schools that was published in November 2014 identified democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, as fundamental British values.

¹⁵ In his speech on 'Managed Migration and Earned Citizenship' (Brown 2008), Brown added 'internationalism' to his list, understood as a kind of outward lookingness.

¹⁶ Uberoi and Modood argue that in an earlier article I ignore the possibility that particular institutions may be *partially constituted* by universal liberal-democratic values. They write 'Mason suggests that the realisations of universal values can be distinctive, rather than the values themselves, but this assumes a neat separation. For example, he claims that the

value of democracy is realised in Britain, *inter alia*, through parliament, but surely the latter is also partially constituted by this value, and democracy takes different forms in different countries. This suggests that such values can be distinguished analytically from their instantiations, but can also take a distinctive form *in* them, and this possibility is ignored.’ (Uberoi and Modood 2013, p. 30). Parliament may be democratic because (some of) its members are elected, but it does not follow that it is constituted by democracy; indeed historically speaking Parliament has taken non-democratic forms (Compare: the National Health Service may be just because it distributes health care justly, but it does not follow that it is constituted by the just distribution of health care, and indeed it is perfectly possible that it will evolve in ways that make its health care provision unjust.) More generally, it seems to me that if we can distinguish a value from its instantiation, then it is possible to characterise the value in a way that is independent of its instantiations. And if we can characterise a value independently of its instantiations, then this is because these instantiations are a means or a vehicle for its realisation, in which case they are not partially constituted by the value itself. When the value itself takes a distinctive form in a set of institutions that is because those institutions embody a particular interpretation of it. For example, representative institutions involve a rejection of the idea that representation is an abandonment of democracy.

¹⁷ Similar disagreements about the limits of freedom of expression emerged again in public debates in Britain in 2005 after the publication of cartoons depicting Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, and also in 2011 and 2012 when other cartoons depicting the prophet were published in the Paris-based satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*.

¹⁸ Might we say that the kind of shared identification I am describing is a form that a shared national identity might take? Might those who identify with different institutions and practices, or the same institutions and practices for different reasons, be regarded as being British in different ways? This issue is partly just semantic, but it seems to me that the shared identification I am describing is a rather different phenomenon from what we ordinarily regard as sharing a national identity since the latter involves ‘a sense of belonging together’, that is, a belief amongst a group of people that there is some deep reason why they should associate together politically, a reason that does not simply reduce to the fact that they are living within the borders of a state for a whole variety of contingent reasons.

¹⁹ The issue here is not simply whether the practice being permitted by the exemption is itself unjust. There is also the question of whether exemptions of this kind are inherently unfair, or whether they are required by fairness in some cases. In this article I have tried to sidestep this issue. For important contributions to the debate over it, see see Barry (2001, pp. 146-193); Parekh, (1998, 397-411); Waldron (2002); and Quong (2006).

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